

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Flowering of the Pacific: Being an Account of Joseph Banks' Travels in the South Seas and the Story of his Florilegium.**

By Brian Adams

British Museum (Natural History): London 1986 ISBN 000 217472 3

Pp. 194; 18 B. & W. and 48 Col. Pls; R.R.P.: \$39.95 (cloth)

Brian Adams has written a superbly readable account of the collection of the raw botanical material that is cumulated in Banks' *Florilegium*. In addition to intensive research on the journals of Joseph Banks, James Cook, Sydney Parkinson and an anonymous manuscript believed to have been written by Able Seaman James Mario Matra, the author drew upon his own personal experience by visiting most of the *Endeavour's* landfalls; Madeira, Brazil, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, and Java. The result is another of Adams' masterpieces.

Banks' *Florilegium* is the most highly acclaimed collection of botanical prints ever to be published. *Florilegium* in Latin means "a binding of flowers".

Work on the *Florilegium* began when Joseph Banks returned to England in 1771 with the results of three years of sea voyage and collection on the *Endeavour*. The 738 exquisitely engraved plates were completed in 1784 but were not published as the *Florilegium* until Joe Studholme, the director of Editions Alecto, had his attention drawn in the 1960's to the existence of Banks' engraved plates by Dr Chris Humphries, Curator of Botany at the British Museum (Natural History). One hundred sets of these plates are currently being printed by Edward Egerton-Williams.

The voyage of the *Endeavour* between 1768-1771 took place during that period of British history which saw the expansion of the British Empire to the "New World". The expedition was commissioned by the Admiralty to observe the transit of Venus in the South Seas and the noted astronomer Charles Green was chosen to carry out this scientific observation. Underneath this sei-

entific facade, the *Endeavour's* voyage had a strong political motive: to beat the French and other European navigators to the discovery of the mythical "Terra Australis". Lieutenant James Cook was appointed as captain of the *Endeavour* instead of the more experienced Alexander Dalrymple, who was equally knowledgeable of the Pacific. The reason for this lay in the *Endeavour's* status as a warship and the Admiralty ruled that a naval officer should be in command.

Joseph Banks was only 25 years old when he joined the *Endeavour* as one of the paying gentlemen passengers. He was a wealthy landowner from East Anglia who from a very tender age possessed a passion for both botany and young maidens. He had become a Fellow of the Royal Society as a result of his successful expedition to Labrador and New Foundland two years previously.

For his scientific team, Banks gathered two artists Sydney Parkinson and Alexander Buchan. In addition he took his personal secretary and the keen naturalist Herman Sporing, together with four servants. He had his cabin well stocked with nets, bottles for preserving animals and fish in spirit, chemicals to treat plants and seeds, drawing materials, paper and paint.

Sydney Parkinson, an extremely talented draughtsman from Edinburgh, was responsible for drawing most of the botanical specimens. After the death of landscape artist Alexander Buchan early in the voyage, Sydney Parkinson took on the role of ethnographer as well. Parkinson completed 1000 illustrations during the voyage, but sadly died of malaria, contracted in Java, on the last leg of the expedition to London. After the *Endeavour's* return to England a legal battle was fought between Sydney Parkin-

son's elder brother Stanfield and Banks over ownership of certain illustrations that Sydney Parkinson had made outside his working time.

Banks' companion, Dr Daniel Solander, a 33 year old Swedish bachelor, was a graduate of Uppsala University and former student of the renowned botanist Linnaeus. His intellectual and personal association with Banks brought the pair of them into the limelight following the *Endeavour's* return to England. Both were highly sought after at social gatherings and were invited to give lectures about their voyage to numerous scientific bodies in Europe.

On one occasion, Banks delivered a lecture entitled "The Manners of the Women of Otaheite (Tahiti)" to the Batavian Society of Rotterdam. In his humorous account he extolled the virtues of the freedom of love in the societies of the South Seas and described the women as "wonderful goddess-like creatures from the Pacific".

Since Europe was at the time enamoured with the virtues of chastity and modesty in women, Banks and Solander as a consequence became the subjects of caricature and criticism by a group of London satirists. Banks was dubbed "The Fly-Catching Macaroni": macaroni had just been introduced from Italy and was becoming a very fashionable analogy for a fop.

After Dr Hawkesworth's publication of the account of *Endeavour's* voyage to the South Seas, Banks and Solander were once again subjected to the ire of satirists who let forth a deluge of verse scrutinizing the morality of the *Endeavour's* crew, especially that of Banks. Banks had written a very vivid diary account of his meeting with Queen Oherea of Tahiti and her sexual prowess. Similarly, Mario Matra had noted in his diary that the women of Otaheite were readily available to the crew for "three nails and a knife", a situation that led Cook to express his concern that the *Endeavour* was losing her seaworthiness. In fact half the sailors paid for these pleasures with their lives, after contracting venereal disease from the local women who had indulged in liaisons with the crew of the Spanish ship *Dolphin* a year earlier.

Even during these "moral lapses" of the expedition, the scientific collection of botanical specimens was faithfully carried out by Dr Solander and Sydney Parkinson. On their

return to England, Solander and Banks carefully classified the plant specimens according to the Linnaean method and they named about 110 new genera and 1300 new species. One of the new genera first collected in Australia was named *Banksia* after Banks.

The *Endeavour* spent four very interesting but perilous months along the uncharted eastern coastline of Australia. First landfall on this continent was at Botany Bay, so called because Banks and Solander collected hundreds of new plant species here. The largest section of the *Florilegium* consists of 340 sheets of botanical prints of Australian flora, developed from the finished watercolours by Sydney Parkinson. The Pacific did indeed blossom forth for Banks and his team, as well as Captain Cook, who raised the British flag for the first time at Botany Bay and discovered Port Jackson, the future site for Sydney.

Europe's scientific world waited with bated breath for the publication of the *Florilegium*. Linnaeus wrote constantly to John Ellis, his counterpart in England, asking him to remind Banks and Solander of the vast impact their findings would make in the learned world. Seventeen years after the *Endeavour's* return to England, Dr Daniel Solander, co-author of the *Florilegium* died of a stroke. Banks' enthusiasm began to wane after Solander's death; and since he was always the gentleman amateur, not a scientist, he never felt the pressure to publish. Banks died aged 77 years in 1820, without completing the *Florilegium*.

As an account of the history of the origin and production of the *Florilegium*, Adams' book has much to commend it. His easy narrative style is very captivating and the reader cannot help but become a 'stowaway' on the expedition. The 'armchair stowaway' bounces back to reality only to consult an atlas for geographic bearings, as the book is a little short on maps. The only map in this publication is of New Zealand, taken from a reproduction of Captain James Cook's map in Sydney Parkinson's journal. Separating the book into its two natural sections - the voyage with the collecting of the raw material, and the saga of the realization of Banks' *Florilegium* — was a logical step. *The Flowering of the Pacific* is well documented and carries a bibliographic list of the material the author used for his research, additional infor-

mation concerning Bank's *Florilegium* and an extensive index. Overall this is a fine account, and comes highly recommended.

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### Frogs of the Northern Territory

by Michael J. Tyler and Margaret Davies

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Pp. vi+77; 39 Figs; 49 Col. Pls; R.R.P.: \$7.00

For someone trying to come to grips with the frog fauna of the Northern Territory, this slim volume is unsurpassed in its content and accuracy. The reason is that Mike Tyler and Margaret Davies remain the most active amphibian systematists operating in Australia generally, and in the Northern Territory specifically. Indeed, of the 45 species identified in the Territory, 20 were originally described by the present authors, either individually or jointly with other colleagues.

The chief advantage of this volume is its presentation: it has soft covers, measures 165 x 240mm and is easily carried as a field guide. The first part of the book comprises a general introduction, followed by sections on: names of frogs; their external features; the frog fauna of the N.T.; sexual differences; enemies; reproduction; habitats; collecting and legislation. These brief introductory sections provide the reader with the very basic information necessary for capturing and identifying species. My only criticism of the presentation of this information is essentially an editorial one. Each of the sections starts on a separate page regardless of its size. The result is that large areas of blank paper necessarily appear when sections are small. This is also inconsistent with latter parts of the book which are in a continuous format.

The second part of the book consists of species descriptions. Each species is individually listed in alphabetic sequence. The

species name is provided, although unfortunately the authors have not followed systematic practice and included the names of the workers who described the beast. A plate citation is then noted, so that the reader can refer to the photographic section in the centre of the book to see what the animal looks like. A brief description, remarks on biology, distribution, the origin of the species name, and general comments then follow. A detailed map showing known point locations is included for each species, or in some cases several species. This is easily the best approach to plotting distributions, for one may be able to find new extensions of a species range, without the vagaries of a shaded overlay.

The photographic section has been included in the middle of the book. Six clear colour plates are grouped on each page, and while it is usually preferable to have a photograph of the animal accompanying its description text, this means of presentation is cheaper and it also permits comparisons between other closely related species which is a definite advantage for a volume of this type. Only three of the 45 species do not have colour photographs. This is hardly surprising when one considers the beasts involved: *Raniidella remota*, which is very similar to *R. bilingua* and can only be separated with great difficulty; *Uporelia micromeles*, which is known from one locality in the Tanami